



Moon by Simaudio Nēo Ace

Device Type: All-in-One Music Player

Input: 2x line level RCA (configurable as "pass-through" inputs), 1x MM phono, 1x front-mounted 1/8" mini-jack (for personal media players), 8x digital (Ethernet, USB, 2x Toslink, 2x Coax S/PDIF, aptX Bluetooth, WiFi)

Output: 2x speaker, 1/4" front-mounted headphone

Dimensions (W x H x D): 16.9 x 3.5 x 14.4 in.

Weight: 24 lbs (shipping weight)



Ace

Have you ever called someone "Ace"? And meant it?

The Moon by Simaudio Nēo Ace (A Complete Experience) All-in-One Music Player, I've hired a cryptologist to figure out that naming convention, is a 50wpc integrated amp (into 8 ohms), a network player and USB DAC capable of processing up to 32-bit/382kHz PCM and DSD256 data (Ethernet tops out at 192kHz and DSD64), a headphone amp, a MM phono amp, and a Bluetooth'd music player. All in one.

Amplification is of the class A/B variety, the DAC inside is from ESS (ESS9010), and Simaudio's own Moon intelligent Network Device (MiND) module takes care of the network (Ethernet and WiFi) data. Hand-in-hand with the MiND module is the MiND app which runs on iOS and Android platforms. Simaudio announced Roon compatibility but it has yet to roll out (rats). As you can see from the specs, Ace is well endowed; it covers the current highest of the high-res via USB, your turntable (MM), and Bluetooth. All in one. Just add speakers (and music). As regular readers know, I've had very good fortune with Simaudio's products. Most recently the MOON by Simaudio Nēo 280D MiND tickled my fancy, earning it a place on my Favorite bits list. If we combine the thoughts behind these thoughts, i.e. well endowed + a history of enjoying the Sim sound, we should be in for a treat.



Figure 2: Néo ACE Rear panel

Everything about Ace is straight forward and I found the MiND app to be easy and intuitive to use. The app supports Tidal, Deezer, and Qobuz streaming, and makes the initial set up a simple process; open the app, it finds Ace, you tell it where your music is stored, log in to your streaming account(s), and you are off to the races. Playing your music is also easy and intuitive although I find Roon to be...better.



The front panel is also straight forward. I really wonder why we go all in-depth describing the look of a front panel layout directly below its image so I've decided not to. If you want the low down, the 32-page Ace manual has you more than covered. Ace also comes with a remote which allows you do things to the Ace remotely. I mostly stuck with the app since it does most everything I needed. Like most Simaudio products I've seen and touched, Ace is nice to look at and touch, feeling well-built and serious. It is clearly a product from a company that knows how to make products. Lots of them.



Figure 1: Nêo ACE Front panel



Hold All The Ace(s)

Ace is the 4th all-in-one component I've reviewed...recently. The rest of the gang includes the Hegel Music Systems Röst, Lumin M1, and the Peachtree Audio nova300 Amplifier. In terms of functionality, Ace matches or Aces its brethren and in terms of sound quality it is a serious contender. My only reservation about claiming a clear sound-quality winner is...you. Simaudio has, according to my ears and experience, a house sound which is best conveyed in two words: clarity and control. When listening to my music through Ace, I do not wonder what if.... By that I mean to say that some components leave me wanting, sonically, which makes my mind (pardon the pun) wander away from the music and into the realm of my "rathers"; I'd rather hear more color (or bass, or breath, or drama). Ace, on the other hand, leaves me wanting more music. Music has that lovely spark and sparkle, heft, color, and clarity that takes one into the recording. Sure, my Ayre and totaldac take me much, much, deeper but they also made me reach much, much deeper into my savings. The Peachtree nova300 offers a more robust sound (I like big bass and I cannot lie), while the Hegel Röst is a bit sweeter and more refined sounding. This is where you come in. As far as my choice goes, I'm not in the market for an all-in-one but if I was, I'd buy the one that a) offers all of the functionality I want (ACE or nova300), and b) the sound I enjoy most (depends on the speaker).



If you want more direction from me in terms of which of these fine players you should move to your short list, or heaven forbid which one you should buy without hearing it first, I have this to say—Ace holds all of the cards in terms of functionality and if you want a solid performer who offers a well balanced sound and oozes clarity and control, go Ace. If you'd like more umph from your speakers, go nova300. Just remember that the nova300 only offers a USB input.

NATURE UNVEILED



I spent some comparing the Ethernet and USB DAC inputs, not too much time, and I did not hear a dramatic difference between them. To my mind, there I go again, Ace buyers will use Ethernet since it makes little sense to buy what you already have. That being said, my microRendu is Roon Ready so I really hung out in this mode due to the interface not a clear sonic preference, but for those who are keen on passing their 352.8/384kHz and DSD 128/256 files, USB is the only option on Ace. Speaking of cutting edge, I remain a fan of Bluetooth so Ace's aptX ability makes me happy because I can have my friends and family play through Ace from their phone. nothing says Welcome like letting people play their music in your house.

I spent many weeks over months listening to Ace, the company recommends 400 hours of playing before taking Ace too seriously, so it got to pass all kinds of music from Hoagy Carmichael to Acid Mothers Temple..., from Current 93 to Golijov, and from The Bug/Earth to Patsy Cline. And everything in between. And I always liked what I heard. If I try to imagine a person having purchased Ace and being unhappy about their purchase, I come up blank. Instead, I picture someone satisfied. If you listen to headphones, I don't spend time listening thus, I also imagine satisfaction with Ace's headphone amp as it carries the Simaudio house sound. Sometimes I think, and I admit my imagination can get the better of me, that reviewers, whether paid or unpaid, feel the need to be critical in order to pretend that they are worth listening to more so, I dare say, than the gear at hand.

The MM phono input served my Well Tempered 'table well, well enough that I can't see anyone with a 'table not being happy with Ace's way with analog. I also see a phono input as mandatory, i.e. not an option for an "all-in-one", but that's because I have an analog rig and lots of records (and I continue to add more to that lot).



Hey, Ace

All kidding about Simaudio's naming conventions aside, Ace is aptly named. I would not hesitate recommending Ace for any buyer looking to buy an all-in-one that embodies today's functionality with every day's listening pleasure.